United Nations A/54/PV.35

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

35th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 20 October 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Jayanama (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 11

Report of the Security Council (A/54/2)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the President of the Security Council, His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, to introduce the report of the Security Council.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It is my privilege to introduce to the General Assembly the annual report of the Security Council, covering the period from 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999.

The members of the Security Council traditionally attach great importance to the timely preparation and presentation of this report, pursuant to Articles 15 and 24 of the United Nations Charter. As in previous years, the draft report was approved at a formal meeting of the Security Council. The members of the Security Council ensured that the report was submitted in a timely manner to the General Assembly before the beginning of the general debate at the current session. They are grateful to the staff of the Security Council secretariat for their professionalism and tireless efforts on behalf of the Security Council.

The report clearly shows that the Security Council's working agenda during the reporting period was extremely full and intense. Over 100 official meetings were held and 72 resolutions and 37 presidential statements adopted.

The range of issues considered by the Council remains very wide, covering all major aspects of the maintenance of international peace and security. Issues related to the settlement of regional conflicts and to ensuring stability in Africa remain high on the Council's agenda. Drawing on the results of its consideration of relevant reports of the Secretary-General, the Council adopted a number of specific long-term decisions in respect of these reports. The Council also paid close attention to the issues of preventing and settling conflicts and stabilizing the situation in the Balkan region. The adoption of resolution 1244 (1999) on the situation in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, has significantly strengthened the central role of the Council in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Issues related to the settlement of conflict situations in other regions, including the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, East Timor, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Georgia, figured prominently in the work of the Security Council.

A number of global aspects of the maintenance of international peace and security and joint efforts to combat international terrorism remain on the Council's agenda. In particular, decisions on post-conflict peace-building, the protection of and humanitarian assistance to

99-86173 (E)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

refugees and other civilians during conflicts, and children in armed conflict were adopted. The discussions on these problems contribute to their due consideration by the General Assembly and other United Nations organs and help the Security Council better to fulfil the tasks assigned to it by the international community.

In the period covered by this report, the Security Council adopted several steps to improve its working methods and those of the sanctions committees, as well as to make the deliberations of its members more transparent to the general membership of the United Nations.

The present report, like last year's, has been prepared in the new format, reflecting the intention of Council members to ensure greater transparency in its work. The members of the Security Council hope that the report will provide useful and detailed information on the activities of the Council during the year. They attach great significance to the consideration of the report by the General Assembly as an important part of the dialogue between the two principal organs of the United Nations, and will duly take into account remarks and suggestions made by member States in the course of today's discussion.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): I would like to thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, for his articulate presentation of the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

We welcome the effort by the Council to share information on its activities with the rest of the United Nations membership.

Today, I would like to draw the attention of my colleagues to some of the important developments relating to the Security Council that are not recorded in the report, such as the growing involvement of non-Council members in the activities to facilitate and support the Security Council's actions on humanitarian crises. It is noteworthy that in recent years non-Council members have been increasingly engaged in efforts to complement the actions of the Security Council. The experiences of Kosovo and East Timor are cases in point.

On Kosovo, the Security Council failed initially to function effectively, although the Council was eventually called in to take over the issue. It was a combination of intensive efforts by some members of the Council and non-Council members that laid the groundwork for Council resolution 1244 (1999). Later the countries belonging to the Group of Friends on Kosovo also played a constructive role in helping the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo to carry out its task.

On East Timor, the Security Council could act very quickly, particularly as compared with the case of Kosovo, because the Indonesian Government cooperated flexibly with the Council. The Secretary-General played a crucial role in persuading the Indonesian Government to accept the international force. But we must not ignore the fact that the Indonesian Government listened carefully to quiet advice given by some friendly nations in the region, as it made critical decisions to respond flexibly to the call of the Secretary-General and the international public opinion behind him.

More important, it was the consultations and preparations by the countries in the region, if not by a regional organization, that paved the way for the successful implementation of the popular consultation on 30 August, and later for the quick establishment of an international force in East Timor, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1264 (1999).

In Africa, however, the Council acted almost single-handedly. The experience of Angola to date is most disappointing in this context. There, the Council issued resolution after resolution, only to see them unheeded and ignored by the warring parties. The Council imposed sanctions, but they were not observed. Ultimately, the Council had to withdraw its peacekeeping operation from that country.

While we welcome the Council's renewed initiative towards peace and national reconciliation in Angola, taken last Friday, this past year's unfortunate developments shed light not only on the difficulty the Council faces when it has to act in the sheer absence of a commitment to peace on the part of warring parties, but also on the importance of securing compliance with the decisions of the Council by countries in the region.

Indeed, there are encouraging examples of local initiatives to complement the Security Council's activity. For example, in Sierra Leone the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its military sub-organization, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), as well as the countries in the region, have played a significant role in restoring and maintaining peace in the country. The tireless leadership of former President Nyerere, whom we lost recently, must be remembered as a driving force for peace in the process to bring stability to Burundi. And, the efforts of countries

concerned and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) were also conducive to ensuring a ceasefire agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Notwithstanding these encouraging initiatives by African countries and their regional groups, it is evident that support and assistance from the developed countries in the North are vitally important in order to prevent the recurrence of conflicts and humanitarian emergencies in Africa. Yet we have to admit that such support has so far been either too slow or too small, or both, particularly as compared with the cases of Kosovo and East Timor.

Need for stronger leadership on the part of the Security Council in drawing the international community's attention more to crises in Africa cannot be overemphasized. Equally important is a positive response from the international community to calls for help and support.

In the light of the situations I have described, there is no doubt that support from non-Council members is essential for the success of the Council's activities on humanitarian crises. It is therefore important for the Council to increase the transparency of its activities and to share what it knows with non-Council members.

To make the Security Council more effective and more credible is what all the Members of the United Nations now want. We have to admit that increased transparency does not necessarily lead to the enhanced effectiveness of the Security Council. However transparent the Council may become, or however many open meetings may be held, such steps alone would not automatically enhance the Council's effectiveness.

The Council's effectiveness can be enhanced by the efforts of its members to act promptly and effectively, and the responsibilities of the permanent members are particularly great in this regard. Equally important is that the Council's decisions should be respected and observed fully by the entire United Nations membership. We have already learned enough about this, and we are now required to redouble our efforts to practise what we have learned.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): I should like to start by expressing my delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, President of the Security Council for the current month, for presenting the annual report (A/54/2) on the work of this organ, covering the period from 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999.

Ukraine attaches particular importance to the item "Report of the Security Council". In the view of my delegation, the Council's main purpose has to be viewed as upholding the principle of accountability, which is fundamental to ensuring the effectiveness of any political organization, especially if it is made up of sovereign States. Consideration of this agenda item has always offered the General Assembly a unique opportunity to make a comprehensive assessment of the Security Council's activities over the past year and to discuss the manner in which the Council carries out its responsibilities as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

In making my delegation's contribution to this important discussion, I find it very difficult to abstract myself from the fact that just a few days ago this General Assembly elected Ukraine to serve as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the next two years. In this connection, let me take this occasion to convey through you, Sir, my Government's most sincere appreciation to all Member States for the high honour conferred on Ukraine. I would like to reiterate that my country is prepared to discharge the important responsibilities of a non-permanent member of the Council, and will do so in the interest of all Member States of the United Nations.

In my delegation's view, despite the energy and intensity which characterized the Security Council's work, the 12 months covered by the report will go down in history as a difficult year for the United Nations. But at the same time, those 12 months have impressively supported these famous words pronounced almost 40 years ago:

> "Our instrument and our hope is the United Nations, and there is little merit in the impatience of those who would abandon this imperfect world instrument because they dislike our imperfect world".

Ukraine is convinced that the Member States should be really determined to preserve the unique role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security in the next century. Once such determination prevails, the main task on our agenda will consist of the Council's comprehensive transformation,

affecting almost every aspect of its activities, as well as its current composition and methods of work.

In this context, I would like to comment briefly on some domains where, in the view of my delegation, changes are indeed imperative. First, Ukraine is convinced that adequate and equal attention on the part of the Security Council to conflict situations in different regions constitutes an essential prerequisite for upholding the Council's authority in the field of international peace and security. Certainly, the most flagrant case here will be the kind of response provided so far by the Security Council to the real demands and needs of the African continent. On the one hand, it is really difficult to blame the Council for the lack of attention to Africa, to which over 60 per cent of the issues currently under active consideration by that organ are related. However, Ukraine understands the feeling of disappointment on the part of African countries, which expect more energetic action on the part of the Security Council.

In recent times, there have been encouraging signs that the Security Council has started to make some drastic changes in its overall attitude towards Africa. Important evidence of this promising trend is that the Council is about to authorize a peacekeeping operation in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the members of the Council continue to debate the possibilities of authorizing a peacekeeping operation to provide assistance in the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is worthwhile to stress that the final outcomes not only will be important not only for the Lusaka and Lomé processes, but will bear fundamental significance for the entire African continent. They will provide clear testimony as to whether the ill-famed "Afro-fatigue syndrome" and "Afro-pessimism" have definitely given way to "Afro-enthusiasm".

Secondly, there is an urgent need to reinforce the preventive dimension in the Security Council's activities. In his latest annual report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General presented convincing arguments for why it is imperative for the United Nations to start the transition from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Undoubtedly, it is the Security Council which has to play a leading role in such a transition. Preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment and preventive disarmament as the main short-term strategies, and comprehensive peace-building addressing the root causes of conflict as the long-term preventive strategy, have to acquire prominence and even predominance in the Council's activities. Furthermore, the Council has to move further towards starting a new phase in the history of its relationship with United Nations Member States, from which it derives all its power and responsibilities.

It is undeniable that over the past few years the Security Council has taken many worthwhile steps in order to increase the openness and transparency of its activities. We welcome this progress and encourage the Security Council to continue this pursuit. In this connection, I would like to reiterate that the cornerstone for such a relationship is laid down in Articles 31 and 32 of the United Nations Charter. In the view of my delegation, the content of those Articles actually implies that non-members of the Security Council are provided with the same rights to influence the decisions of the Council as its members, except through participation in the voting procedure.

There are also many other domains and dimensions in which urgent change is pressing. One is the overdue solution to the problem of the increase in the membership of the Security Council. Another compelling issue is the need to bring into correspondence with today's world realities the Council's decision-making process. Consideration of agenda item 38, entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters", will give us the opportunity to comment in depth on those problems.

Ukraine remains realistic in the understanding that the comprehensive transformation of the Security Council and its activities does not promise to be an easy endeavour. Slow progress in the relevant Working Group of the General Assembly on Security Council reform should induce us to kindle as much enthusiasm as possible and to lower our expectations for quick results; and let us not forget that the required transformation goes far beyond the mandate of the Working Group.

However, it must be made clear from the very outset that slogans, however resounding and thunderous, will not suffice. To achieve success we need to realize the indispensability of this intergovernmental institution for our world and for our peoples; we need to understand that our unwillingness to make concessions will lead to even worse losses; and we have to display the political will to transform such understanding into action.

For its part, Ukraine is determined to persist in its efforts towards making progress in all undertakings that

will result in the strengthening of the United Nations and its Security Council.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): The Mongolian delegation would like to thank Ambassador Lavrov of the Russian Federation, current President of the Security Council, for introducing the annual report of the Council to the General Assembly, covering the period 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999. The report is quite voluminous, rich in factual material and comprehensive.

Members of the United Nations have a legitimate interest in the activities of the Council, which not only acts on behalf of all of them but also is the only organ whose decisions Members have agreed to carry out. Therefore, Mongolia, like other Members of the United Nations, attaches great importance to the General Assembly's discussion of the Security Council's report, as envisaged in Article 15 and Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter. This provides an opportunity to discuss the activities of the Council and the possible ways and means to maintain or enhance its credibility, to enhance its effectiveness and the effectiveness of coordination and interaction between the two main organs of the United Nations, and to make the General Assembly an effective organ within the powers accorded to it by the Charter. Therefore, we believe that such consideration is equally useful for the Council and for the Assembly.

During the year under review, the Council held 121 formal meetings, adopted 72 resolutions, issued 37 statements by the President and held 239 consultations of the whole, totalling some 511 hours. During those meetings and consultations, much time was devoted to the conflicts in Africa and to the questions relating to Iraq and the former Yugoslavia. This alone demonstrates that the Council has been seriously seized of the many pressing issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security, and has contributed to resolving many issues, while containing others.

The structure of the report is essentially the same as last year's. A result of the improvements sought and made during the last few years, it allows the general membership to be better informed about the activities of the Council. One of the innovations in this year's report is an addendum reproducing the statements made by the Presidents of the Council to the press following consultations of the whole of the Council. Therefore, with respect to the format of the report, my delegation would like to commend the Council.

The content of the report is also being enriched. However, we believe that there is still room for improvement. That would include more analytical reports or assessments of situations and of the effect of earlier decisions taken by the Council, as well as more analytical information on the consultations of the whole, where the decisions are taken de facto. Special reports, envisaged by the Charter, could focus on specific issues on which the Council could seek the views and recommendations of the General Assembly.

One of the areas where clarification is needed is communications of Governments that are brought to the attention of the Council. The mere listing of such communications in the report, without disclosing their content, takes 17 pages. Of course, it is assumed that such communications are duly noted by the members of the Council. However, my delegation sees little merit in merely reproducing the list of communications without any comment whatsoever. Perhaps the list could be presented in a condensed and analytical form. We hope that the next report of the Council will be even more in the spirit of General Assembly resolution 51/193.

Having commented briefly on the report, my delegation would like to focus on the following questions.

I begin with peacekeeping operations. The report clearly demonstrates that they continue to be essential for maintaining peace in many parts of the world, including ceasefires within States. Of late the peacekeepers are also being charged with other missions, reflecting, as the Secretary-General has pointed out in his report (A/54/1) on the work of the Organization, the need for transition from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. It also reflects recognition of the fact that in many cases a multidimensional approach to peacekeeping is required. My delegation subscribes to the holistic approach to security. Though not a military Power, Mongolia believes that it can make its contribution to peacekeeping operations by contributing in the areas where it could be useful. Bearing this in mind, the Government of Mongolia has decided to participate in peacekeeping activities, and last month it signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations on standby arrangements, whereby it will participate in future United Nations operations, contributing staff officers, military observers and medical officers.

I turn next to humanitarian intervention. The general debate and the debate on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization have demonstrated that the question of so-called humanitarian interventions raises many delicate, debatable and pertinent questions. They include questions of State sovereignty and the moral imperative to act forcefully in the face of gross violations of human rights. My delegation fully agrees with the Secretary-General's statement in his report that enforcement actions without Security Council authorization threaten the very core of the international security system founded on the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore believe that the Security Council should carefully look into this question, which could have far-reaching consequences.

Another question that is justly raised is the perceived inconsistency of the Security Council when responding to humanitarian emergencies. This matter was raised in the Security Council itself just recently, when the Council was considering the progress report on the situation in Africa. We agree with the Secretary-General that the principles of multilateralism and humanitarian ethics should be applied equally, based on the criterion of human need. In this respect, my delegation welcomes the steps taken by the Security Council in dispatching its own fact-finding mission to East Timor, which led to the adoption of its resolution 1264 (1999).

Turning to the question of the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations, my delegation would like to point out the importance of involving regional organizations in peacekeeping operations and managing regional conflicts. This kind of relationship is important for many reasons, including even financial, when decisions are taken sometimes by the Council with little regard for their financial requirements. The consequences of such decisions could be enormous. We believe that in cases of the involvement of regional organizations, which we support in principle, a clear line of authority should be established on the ground, and the central role of the United Nations, particularly of the Security Council, should be upheld, as reflected in the Charter. Acting otherwise, or even circumventing the United Nations and the Security Council, would not only lead to erosion of the credibility of the Council, but could also have negative consequences for international peace and security.

One positive innovation in the practice of the Security Council is increased holding of open thematic debates on different issues. Thus, the Council has lately held open debates on such issues as landmines, child soldiers, protection of humanitarian assistance workers, post-conflict peace-building, protection of civilians in armed conflict, among others. Some of those debates were followed by action on the part of the Council, including statements by its President and even resolutions of the Council. We believe that this useful practice of involving the wider membership of the United Nations should be continued and enriched.

Open debate allows non-members of the Council, especially smaller States, to contribute to the examination of the issues. In many cases they are in a better position to understand the problems, interpret the situation and offer possible solutions. We agree with the view that such debates should be organized and scheduled in such a manner as to allow the views of non-members to be not only heard, but also considered. That, in our view, would be in the spirit of, and correspond to, the purpose of such debates. One such issue on which perhaps the Council could consult with the general membership in the near future is non-proliferation, the question of assessing the situation with respect to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and how to make it operational. We believe that this matter warrants the Council's attention, if not action.

On the question of sanctions, I can be very brief. My delegation's views were reflected in the 1998 Durban Final Document of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The last question that my delegation would like to touch upon is that of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Council. Although it does not directly relate to the report of the Council, it is in order to say a word or two about the work of the Open-ended Working Group.

We believe that the Working Group is doing a fair job, although much faster progress is expected of it by the majority of the membership. However, the Working Group's progress depends, in the final analysis, on the positions of States themselves. We believe that most of the positive steps taken lately by the Council with respect to its working methods and rationalization of its procedures have been prompted by the proposals made in the Working Group. During its last meeting the Working Group registered some progress, when it was finally agreed:

> "the question of the enlargement of the Security Council implies the consideration of the question of veto".

The Mongolian delegation believes that movement in this direction should be pursued at the next meeting of the Working Group.

Speaking of the question of the veto, my delegation finds interesting the idea proposed by Germany in the general debate that perhaps the permanent members should be required to explain to the general membership in the Assembly their negative votes cast in the Council on non-procedural matters — that is, their vetoes.

With respect to the cluster I issues, especially the expansion of the Council's membership, we believe that progress or breakthrough depends to a great extent on the political will of States, rather than on the skill of negotiators in the Working Group.

The reform of the Council, which is an important part of the reform of the United Nations in general, is yet to be realized. My delegation believes that all peace-loving States would stand to gain from a reform that would strengthen the Security Council, making it more open, transparent and efficient. It is in this spirit that members are making businesslike comments and offering constructive suggestions and proposals.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): I wish to thank Ambassador Sergey Lavrov for his presentation of the report of the Security Council in his capacity as President of the Security Council. I also wish to join those who have congratulated the Security Council secretariat on the hard work that went into the production of the report.

This agenda item provides the General Assembly with its annual opportunity to consider the manner in which it is informed of how the Security Council has discharged the responsibility that the Members of the United Nations have conferred on it. It is important that in giving their views on the report the general membership offer suggestions to the Council for its improvement.

My delegation wishes to acknowledge that the report of the Security Council has undergone very significant and welcome improvement in recent years. It now provides a much more useful and accurate record of the Council's activities. As a result of the implementation of the Council's decision of June 1997, the report now provides some detail regarding the informal consultations, at least the occasions on which informal consultations took place, and the topics of discussion. This is the least we might expect, given that decisions of the Council are, for the most part, taken in accordance with understandings reached in the informal consultations.

I am glad to see that the evolution of the report is continuing, with the inclusion this year, for the first time, of details of the work carried out by the sanctions committees.

I also wish to record our appreciation of the practice, which is becoming more and more systematic, whereby the Council presidency offers briefings immediately following closed consultations. With most of the Council's business done behind closed doors, these briefings can prove invaluable to delegations.

In spite of these improvements, there is still some way to go before the report offers a comprehensive and coherent account of the Security Council's activities in the maintenance of international peace and security. With the inclusion of the monthly assessments made by the successive Presidents of the Council on their own responsibility, in the form of an addendum, the reports have become more valuable.

The statements to the press that the President of the Council is authorized to make are a useful addition to the report. Of course, to the world at large these statements to the press are, or certainly should be, of considerable importance. They are the means by which the members of the Council give the world their collective view regarding a particular issue, and seek to influence the relevant actors. These statements are the means by which the Council acts on a day-to-day basis, without resorting to formal measures, in response to threats to international peace and security. Their value lies also in the analysis they offer of the evolution of the Council's thinking regarding the issues of which it is seized and, ultimately, in any assessment of its effectiveness. Yet until they began to appear in the addendum, the only record of them lay in the media, if the media carried them at all.

However, to those unfamiliar with the workings of the Security Council, the accounts presented in the report of its consideration of the various issues of which it is seized read rather strangely. We are told that informal consultations took place on a particular topic, but not what their conclusions were. There is no mention of the appeals, condemnations, encouragement, et cetera, made by Council members as a result of these consultations. My delegation would urge the Council to take a look at this anomaly.

We have heard many calls for greater openness and transparency in the working methods of the Security Council, including several from the Irish delegation. More openness and transparency is required not just to discharge the Council's duty to keep the membership of the United Nations informed, but also in the interests of its own effectiveness. It is time for the Council to heed calls for more of its day-to-day business to be conducted in formal session. For instance, it is difficult to see the justification for the fact that Secretariat briefings are given to the Council only at its closed consultations. On 27 August this year, we witnessed a welcome departure from this practice, when Under-Secretary-General Prendergast came to the Council, meeting in formal session, and gave a briefing on the conflict in Afghanistan. The general membership would like to see more such occasions.

Nobody wants any constraints placed on the Council that would reduce its ability to work effectively. On the contrary, the general membership wishes to see a united and effective Council. But when international law is being flouted, and when actions are taken which threaten international peace and security, the Council's hand is likely to be strengthened, rather than weakened, if the details are laid bare in open session and if non-members are able to give their views in open debate. The Council meeting of 11 September on East Timor provided a dramatic example of this.

We, the Members of the United Nations, agreed when we signed and ratified the Charter that the Security Council acts on our behalf when carrying out its duties in accordance with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Nowhere does the Charter say that the members of the Security Council may use their position on it in order to act on their own behalf. It is the duty of the members of the Council to agree on united action on our behalf in defence of international peace and security. The prospect of division and of attendant delay and indecisiveness on the part of the Council gives heart to those who would flout international law and undermine international security.

It is saddening, therefore, that during the period covered by this report, there were issues on which the Council was not united and was thus unable to take necessary action on our behalf to bring an end to conflict and suffering.

My delegation greatly welcomes, therefore, the fact that the report before us records consideration by the Council of human security issues, including children and armed conflict, protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situations, and the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Civilians are the chief sufferers in modern armed conflict, and it is highly appropriate that the Security Council should hear directly from those charged with their protection. The effects of armed conflict on civilians must be an ever-present consideration in the minds of the members of the Council when they address issues of international peace and security.

The report also records consideration of the general situation in Africa, as well as a number of decisions and presidential statements in follow-up to the Secretary-General's report of April 1998. No one who reads this or any recent report of the Security Council can fail to note the preponderance of African conflicts, or the fact that many of them are of very long duration.

This has been pointed out time and time again by African delegations, which might be forgiven for thinking that the international community accorded less importance to problems on their continent than to problems elsewhere.

African leaders, as well as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), are now taking determined action to address many of these issues. Such action is essential, but equally essential is the support of the international community and, particularly, of the Security Council. It is the fervent hope of my delegation that the next, and subsequent, issues of the report of the Security Council will record effective action towards ending these longstanding conflicts, and that they will in time fade completely from the agenda.

This report is a fine document of record. We are encouraged by the large number of speakers who have chosen to intervene under this item. We trust that members of the Council, permanent and non-permanent, will pay attention to the many ideas and suggestions which have been made so that we can make this report an even more useful document in both its content and analysis.

Mr. Pohan (Indonesia): I should like at the outset to commend the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation,

for his lucid introduction of the Security Council's annual report, highlighting, among others, a number of procedural measures adopted by the Council in order to enhance the efficiency of its work. We remain confident that these measures could constitute a basis upon which to build our endeavours to further strengthen its efficacy, transparency, accountability and democratization.

It is in this light that Indonesia views the current annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, which as in the past, provides a comprehensive account of the Council's activities during the preceding year and describes its task in the context of its ever-increasing responsibilities. It also contains a compendium of communications and other documents as well as a listing of decisions and actions taken on the issues brought before the Council.

Though several issues, encompassing substance as well as the nature of the Council's working methods and practices, still need to be addressed, overall we have seen a substantial number of positive developments in the Council's deliberations and their outcome. These include an increase in the number of open meetings, greater transparency in the procedures of the sanctions committees, and extensive coverage of the work of its subsidiary organs. We have also seen an increased flow of information to the non-members of the Council on its deliberations and decisions, which has obviated the need for the Permanent Missions to depend on the media. These developments have been further augmented by the briefings offered by the presidency to the non-members at the conclusion of the Council's informal consultations. Consequently, the credibility of the Council with respect to its functioning and *modus operandi* has seen a relative improvement in its relations with the general membership of the Organization. We would like to add that non-Council members, as my delegation is now, would find most useful in particular the enhancement of the established practice of announcing in the *Journal of the United Nations* the issues scheduled for consideration in the informal consultations under the agenda item entitled "Other matters".

On the question of sanctions, my delegation recognizes their legitimacy as an instrument of enforcement provided for in the Charter. However, since sanctions can cause enormous suffering, not only for the targeted population but also for neighbouring States, we would like to reiterate our oft-stated views, namely, that sanctions should be an instrument of last resort and serve specific purposes. They should also have clear and specific parameters and time-frames as well as appropriate review mechanisms, and they should be lifted when their objectives have been achieved.

As a troop-contributing country, Indonesia is also gratified at the periodic interaction between the Council and the countries that contribute troops to various peacekeeping operations. This has led to a greater appreciation of the problems inherent in such activities, elicited greater support from Member States and thereby ensured the future viability of such operations — especially important at a time when they face new challenges and complexities.

Considering the successes and setbacks registered in peacekeeping and taking into account the fact that such activities have moved beyond the traditional concept and taken on a multidimensional aspect, there is an urgent need to review, take stock of and draw conclusions from recent experiences. It would be more beneficial if this were to occur long before a decision is taken by the Council, as it would pave the way for an interactive dialogue between the representatives of the contributing countries and Council members. Furthermore, timely reimbursement to the contributing countries is essential in maintaining and enhancing United Nations operations.

It is also pertinent to note that the Security Council, acting on behalf of the Member States and in their interests, launches peacekeeping operations under Chapter VI or Chapter VII, with specific mandates and under its responsibility. In order to ensure that a specific peacekeeping activity is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and for relevant resolutions, my delegation deems it essential to create a mechanism to monitor and supervise these activities, especially with respect to ensuring the integrity and neutrality of the role of the United Nations.

My delegation has also noted the close cooperation between the United Nations and various regional organizations in multifaceted operations, which has been mutually reinforcing and complementary regarding their respective roles and responsibilities. But it should also be recognized that because these bodies have specific charters, mandates and competences, such cooperation should be carried out on the basis of coordination and consultation in order to strengthen interaction between them.

My delegation would be remiss if it did not mention one of the Council's critical problems, which lies in the

imbalance between the open meetings of the Council, at which it takes formal decisions, and the more frequent use of informal consultations, at which it actually finalizes its decisions. While acknowledging the Council's right to such closed meetings under its provisional rules of procedure — which have been provisional since its inception — we believe that the holding of private meetings, as stipulated in rule 48, should be the exception rather than the general practice. A certain balance needs to be established between the need for confidentiality in the Council's consultations and the interests of transparency vis-à-vis the general membership.

In this regard, we would like to add that in certain situations, delegations with a special interest in an issue under discussion in the Council — particularly those representing countries that are involved in conflict or countries that are affected by conflict — should have the opportunity to present their views to the Council at an early stage in the decision-making process, as provided for under the Charter.

It is clear that the report has fallen short of the objectives contained not only in the final documents adopted at the twelfth Summit of the non-aligned countries but also in General Assembly resolution 51/193, which, among other things, exhorted the Council to provide a substantive and analytical account of its functioning, to include basic information concerning the consultations of the whole and to take further steps to improve its working methods. We believe that the annual report required under Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter should be more than a mere description of activities and reproduction of resolutions and decisions that we already know about. In other words, the report is not a document of substance commensurate with the greatly expanded work of the Security Council.

In our view, therefore, the reports of the Council to the General Assembly should contain an analysis and an assessment of the decisions taken by the Council on each issue in order to meet the need for greater clarity and to allow a better understanding of its reasoning in adopting decisions. The secrecy surrounding its deliberations and the subsequent decision-making process, which affects all nations, is incompatible with the age of informatics. My delegation welcomes the recent practice whereby outgoing Presidents offer a monthly assessment providing a broad overview of the developments that have taken place. Although such assessments are prepared under their own responsibility and in consultation with other members of the Council, we believe that these assessments have the potential for further improvement and could be more forthcoming and analytical.

Furthermore, consideration should also be given to reviewing the Council's relations with other principal organs, especially the General Assembly. This has become essential in the context of the Council's venturing into new areas which are within the purview of other United Nations organs and bodies. In this context, we hold the view that balance is essential in the relationship between the Assembly and the Council, in conformity with their respective mandates as enshrined in the Charter. The Council should have greater accountability to the Assembly for decisions affecting the interests of the global community of nations. It might also be desirable for the Council to submit special reports in order to keep Members abreast of its activities and functions, as mentioned in Article 15 of the Charter.

In short, my delegation welcomes this year's annual report of the Security Council, which it has provided to the General Assembly in fulfilment of its constitutional requirement and in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 of the Charter. It demonstrates that the Council has undertaken to fulfil some of its obligations of accountability to the Assembly, which represents the whole membership of the United Nations, on whose behalf the Council undertakes its tasks. However, even though by considering the content of the report my delegation is surely better informed, the report has not reached a level such that it could enhance our limited wisdom.

In conclusion, since the report of the Security Council is closely linked to the issues of the expansion of its membership and reform of its working methods and practices, I would like to reaffirm that my delegation will continue to play an active part in the ongoing deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group. Lastly, permit me to offer our congratulations to the representatives of Bangladesh, Jamaica, Mali, Tunisia and Ukraine upon their election to the non-permanent membership of the Security Council and to wish them success in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Several years ago, the General Assembly decided, through its well-known resolution 51/193, to request the Security Council to provide more information and greater clarity in the presentation of its reports. That resolution stipulated that the report should provide information with regard to the debates in plenary meetings of the Security

Council, the decisions and recommendations of the subsidiary organs of the Council, the extent to which General Assembly resolutions are taken into account in the Council and the steps taken to improve the Council's working methods. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Council for this report. We also welcome the progress that has been made with regard to its content.

However, since most of the debates and consultations take place during informal consultations and not in open meetings, notwithstanding article 48 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, the information that we receive is incomplete.

It is therefore not easy to attempt to assess the work of the Council from the outside. However, I should like to mention some elements that seem relevant to us.

One of the most remarkable international events to take place recently was the intervention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Kosovo. We consider it unacceptable that a regional defence organization took military action without the authorization of the Security Council.

That was undoubtedly one of the Council's most serious episodes in recent years. The fact that the Council later became involved in activities that led to the resolution of that heated confrontation in no way diminishes the seriousness of those events. The United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, must carry out a candid and sufficiently critical examination of what took place. As a country that respects international law, Colombia believes that watching over international peace and security is the responsibility of the Security Council. The Council represents the Members of the United Nations in carrying out that task, and agreement among its members is therefore an indispensable requirement before actions that involve the use of force are taken. If the threat of the veto was in fact the argument that was used for setting the Security Council aside in the case of Kosovo, that is further proof that that mechanism should not be preserved.

In another context, there is a perception that the Security Council has lacked effectiveness and failed in its sense of timing with regard to conflicts such as those that are currently taking place in the African Continent.

In conclusion, I should now like to make two comments about the new trends in the Security Council. The first relates to the practice of holding open meetings mainly on humanitarian issues. Colombia does not, of course, object to the holding of open meetings in which States that are not members of the Security Council have the opportunity to participate and to explain their positions on the issues under consideration by that important United Nations organ. However, we should like to raise several questions regarding those open debates on humanitarian issues, although we can offer no definitive answers.

For example, should the Security Council deal with humanitarian issues in a comprehensive manner? If we respond in the affirmative to that question, should we then modify the roles of the Economic and Social Council and of the General Assembly to avoid unnecessary duplication of work, or should we reform the Security Council? If we respond in the negative, then we must ask why the Security Council should deal only with some humanitarian issues and not with others. Are some types of human suffering more important than others, and can we classify types of suffering according to those that are of interest to the Security Council and those that are of interest to other United Nations bodies? What is the real added value of holding open debates in the Security Council instead of in the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council?

Is it right to deprive States that are not members of the Security Council of the opportunity to participate in negotiating the presidential statements and resolutions that the Council adopts on humanitarian topics in general? We might also wonder whether the Council's discussion of humanitarian issues responds to a general principle or to specific considerations that are not consistent with the Council's own, and increasing, work.

We have no clear-cut answers to these questions, but we hope that forthright dialogue among Member States will help us to find them.

The second trend I wish briefly to address relates to humanitarian intervention. At the end of the millennium, the majority of conflicts that claim victims are internal conflicts. Moreover, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his report on the work of the Organization (A/54/1), we see an evil tendency in such conflicts to disregard human rights and basic principles of international humanitarian law. What should the international community do to respond to these challenges? The establishment of the International Criminal Court will ensure that those responsible for serious human rights

violations do not go unpunished, but what can we as States do to prevent humanitarian crises?

There has been considerable debate on the report of the Secretary-General and on his 20 September statement to the General Assembly. The discussion will continue for months, because countless questions arise. For instance, under what conditions should the Security Council decide on humanitarian intervention to avert, prevent or put an end to a humanitarian crisis? And once a crisis has captured the attention of Council members, particularly permanent members, what should be the conditions for real action, not mere rhetoric? Who should decide whether a humanitarian crisis poses a threat to international peace and security? Are we setting the precedent, for example, for future ecological or social intervention?

Finally, the report's description of the work of the Security Council is not entirely satisfactory. The Council's actual methods of work prevent the rest of the membership of the Assembly from having full knowledge of its debates and decisions. We therefore reaffirm that the debate on Security Council reform must go beyond consideration of the Council's composition and should encompass improvement of its methods of work. Moreover, we, the Members of the United Nations, should reflect on the mandate we wish to give to the Security Council so that it can truly address the new realities that threaten international peace and security.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the President of the Security Council for introducing to the General Assembly the annual report of the Security Council for the period 1998-1999. The report comprehensively and honestly reflects the work of the Security Council in the last year of this millennium.

The past year has been eventful. We have seen unprecedented turbulence and chaos in the international situation, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Iraq and from Kosovo to East Timor. These international vicissitudes have put the role and authority of the Security Council to the test as never before. At the turn of the century, faced with long-standing old problems and with the numerous new problems that keep cropping up, how will the Security Council best represent the will of all States Members of the United Nations, most meaningfully and effectively carry out its responsibilities as enshrined in the Charter and contribute to the establishment of a fair and reasonable new international order? This is a thought-provoking issue that has been the topic of heated debate. The Chinese delegation would like to make the following observations in that regard.

First, on "humanitarian intervention", the end of the cold war has not brought peace to the world as expected. Conflicts and disputes triggered by poverty and by territorial, religious and ethnic problems continue to arise, one after another. Interference and intervention by outside forces have further complicated and worsened conflicts. Freedom, democracy and human rights are trampled in conflicts and wars, and even the most fundamental rights to subsistence and development cannot be guaranteed. Innocent civilians are being bombed, killed or displaced. Tens of thousands of refugees have lost their homes and their loved ones. The Chinese nation has a time-honoured tradition of respecting human dignity and the value of the human being. We have an old saying in China: "Nothing between the sky and the earth is more precious than human beings; benevolence is not benevolence if it does not treasure human life". We are disheartened and concerned to see humanitarian crises around the world. We do not think the international community is justified in sitting back and doing nothing.

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council is entrusted with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe that only the Security Council can decide whether a given development is a threat to peace and security, and only the Security Council can decide how and when to intervene and who should do it. The mandate to intervene does not lie with any individual country or military grouping, for these can represent only their own will and cannot claim to act in the name of the international community. The United Nations represents the will of the international community. Only within the framework of the United Nations can small and weak countries have a sense of security, can their rights and interests be safeguarded and can hegemonism and power politics be checked. Even when intervention becomes necessary for humanitarian reasons, the ultimate result should be the easing of conflicts and disputes, not their intensification. The war in Kosovo was just one hard and costly lesson in this connection. In the absence of Security Council authorization and in the name of humanitarianism, a regional military organization mounted a large-scale military intervention against a sovereign State. The intervention resulted in the intensification of the conflict and the biggest humanitarian disaster in post-Second-World-War Europe. Such "humanitarian" intervention should not and cannot be allowed to happen again.

Secondly, on sanctions, it is easy to impose sanctions but difficult to lift them. This is a long-standing problem. The situation has not improved a great deal, despite numerous rounds of discussions in the Council and despite the fact that a resolution on this matter was adopted by the General Assembly four years ago. Sanctions against Iraq have been in place for more than nine years now, causing human disasters and bringing untold suffering to tens of thousands of civilians, especially women and children. Not long ago the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) issued a detailed report on the rapidly deteriorating health conditions of Iraqi children and the potentially severe consequences resulting from the sanctions.

The facts and figures in the report are shocking. How can anybody who remains indifferent to such human tragedy have the luxury to talk about humanitarianism or humanitarian intervention? We Chinese often say that it is not too late to mend the fold even after the sheep is lost. If mistakes were not entirely avoided in the first place, then at least we should have the courage and ability to correct them. The Security Council should immediately lift or suspend sanctions against Iraq. More important, we should learn a lesson here and be extremely cautious in deciding to impose sanctions in the future. What is more, we should clearly define the goal, scope and time-frame of the sanctions.

Thirdly, on Africa, the international community has responded enthusiastically to the Secretary-General's report (S/1998/318), presented in April 1998, on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. There have also been calls on the Security Council to pay more attention and allocate more input to African issues. Over the past year or so we have seen some positive developments on the African continent, but the road towards realizing lasting peace and development is still long and arduous. This is a result not only of deep-rooted internal factors in conflict areas, but also of external factors like the political will of the international community and the financial resources it is willing to commit. We have always believed that peace and development around the world are interrelated. The Charter of the United Nations is applicable to all regions of the world. African people should be able to enjoy the peace and development that the people of other regions are enjoying. For this to happen, the Security Council needs to pour into the African continent the same amount of effort as, if not more than, it gives to other regions.

The Security Council had an open debate on the situation in Africa not long ago. During the discussions the Secretary-General and various Member States put forward a number of feasible suggestions. We welcome them, and hope that the various sides will continue to offer cooperation and support so that the promises the Council has made to Africa are implemented. Only if the Council changes its past pattern of producing more words than deeds, and stops using double standards, can the African countries' confidence and trust in the Council remain intact.

Fourthly, on improving the transparency and efficiency of the work of the Council, Council members represent the entire United Nations membership. The Council has the responsibility to act upon the will of all Member States and is also obligated to let Member States have full and easy access to information regarding its work. We support more communication between the Council and non-Council members as well as more transparency in the Council's work. The recent practice of Council Presidents briefing non-Council members after informal consultations should be extended to other Council activities.

Moreover, China supports constant adjustment and improvement of the Council's working methods to make it function even more efficiently and better perform its duties. Most recently, on the issue of East Timor, the mission sent by the Council to Indonesia achieved the expected results. We believe that the Council should continue to try peace-promoting measures that it deems effective.

With the dawning of the new century and new millennium, the Security Council is faced with new challenges and new opportunities. It needs the support of its members as well as of all Member States. Only with such support can it carry out effectively the lofty missions entrusted to it by the Charter. Safeguarding the authority of the Council is in the interest of all Member States. We hope that the various sides will continue to strive in this direction.

Mr. Martynov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus has carefully studied the report of the Security Council presented to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. Our delegation is grateful to the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, for having presented the report today.

We consider this agenda item to be, first, an opportunity to add more transparency to the work of one

of the principal United Nations organs responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security and an opportunity for open discussion by all Member States.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Republic of Belarus notes with satisfaction that the positive dynamics of last year's report remain in this year's document. First, the report reflects the contents of unofficial consultations and gives information on briefings of the Council on the principal items of its agenda. Particular attention should be paid to the background information sections, which give a general picture of the dynamics of the Council's decision-making process on questions of the maintenance of international peace and security.

Belarus welcomes the development of the practice of monthly summaries being given by Presidents of the Security Council following the completion of their mandates. Through this practice, we believe, new ways could be found to enhance the analytic level of information on the Council's work and to present a balanced evaluation for non-Council members of the results of that work.

A very important step in making the Council more adaptive to the challenges it faces today is the decision to include in the document the reports of the sanctions committees, which until very recently were absolutely inaccessible for the majority of United Nations Member States. That was clearly unacceptable.

All those positive changes should, in our view, be consolidated in the Council's working practices and further developed every year.

Belarus regards the process of increasing transparency and openness, both of the substantive part of the report and the Council's working methods, as one of the most important trends. Although a number of innovations have been approved, we very much regret that most informal consultations of the Council remain closed to most United Nations Members.

In addition, unfortunately, the Council members have not yet devoted significant attention to the analytical part of the report. It is obvious to all that a simple record of the resolutions adopted by the Council and an absolutely neutral evaluation of the results of its monthly activities cannot create a reliable basis for extensive dialogue between the Council and non-members of the Council. We are convinced that this discussion must be two-sided and based on a comprehensive assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the various decisions taken by the Council.

We cannot consider the report of the Security Council without also bearing in mind the general context of the role and place of that organ in today's world and within the United Nations system. Belarus, as one of the founding States Members of the United Nations and as a participant in the preparation of the Charter of the United Nations, has strongly and consistently supported the principle of the Security Council's playing the foremost role in decision-making on issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security. This provision of the Charter should be respected by all Member States regardless of their circumstances or political status. The recent cases in which the Security Council was left out of decision-making processes have had a serious effect on international peace and security. They provoked deep concern in the Republic of Belarus. We made it very clear at the Security Council meeting of 24 March that this approach was not acceptable.

Given the current global climate, it is also imperative that the Council take a much more forward-looking and preventive approach. The work of the Council to date by no means fully responds to this need.

Recent events have made it perfectly clear that there is an urgent need for the reform of that most important body of our Organization and for its adaptation to the new global realities. Security Council reform is, in our view, an absolute imperative for our work. On it depends the future viability of our unique forum — not only the viability of the Security Council but that of the entire United Nations and the effectiveness of the entire universal mechanism of collective security and multilateral diplomacy. We believe that maximum transparency and the appropriate geographic representation of the Member States of the Organization are the key aspects of the discussion on how to reform the Council that is taking place within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group established by the General Assembly.

Belarus does not suppose that all these problems can be resolved instantaneously. We are convinced, however, that the consideration of all aspects related to the improvement of the work of the Council should be given new impetus.

Belarus is ready to participate actively in this process. The Government of my country has decided to present our candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Council at the elections to be held in 2001. This is a clear indication of the unconditional priority that Belarus attaches to questions related to the future of the Security Council and to all of the work involved in determining the ways and means of making the Council more effective in the new century.

Mr. Čalovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): The Security Council was the busiest organ of our Organization during the reporting period. It both acted as an executive organ and continued to examine and discuss some issues as a deliberative body. It took many important decisions, and it is clear that for some time it will remain the organ of our Organization in charge of the maintenance of international peace and security.

My delegation has maintained useful and cooperative relations with all Council members, be they permanent or non-permanent. I would like to take this opportunity to express to each of them the satisfaction of the Republic of Macedonia for the cooperation extended to my delegation.

We appreciate the statement of the President of the Security Council for the month of October, the representative of the Russian Federation. It was informative and well thought out, and therefore helpful to the members of the General Assembly.

In its work the Council was, *inter alia*, engaged in two subjects, both extremely important for the peace, security and development of our region and for my country, the Republic of Macedonia.

The Republic of Macedonia, as is well known, was the host of the first, and so far the only, preventive United Nations peacekeeping mission: the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP), which was established in late 1992 and ended its work in February this year. Taking into account the situation in the region, the Security Council extended the mandate of the mission several times. The mission was praised as an important success for the United Nations and the Republic of Macedonia. However, the last request for a further extension, in February of this year, by the Secretary-General and by my Government, was not approved. In spite of Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations, which requests the Council to act on behalf of the Member States, one permanent member of the Council voted against the draft resolution, which had been proposed by many Council members.

The inaction of the Council came at the worst moment, just before the beginning of the Kosovo war, a war which everybody knew was coming. The Secretary-General and the members of the Council were not successful in their efforts to reverse the negative decision, or the indecision, regarding UNPREDEP, and so this success story of the United Nations ended regrettably.

That was a disappointing moment in the Council's work. It had a negative impact on the situation in the region. I hope that similar action, or inaction, by the Council will be avoided in the future.

Soon after this inaction, the Council had before it the Kosovo crisis, the war, the refugees, the danger of a wider war and so on. Regrettably, the positions of the permanent members of the Council were at variance and the Council could act neither to prevent the conflict as it approached nor to settle it when it had begun. Because of this and the magnitude of the Kosovo crisis, the situation was handled, appropriately, by factors outside the Council. Later, the Council became involved and adopted resolution 1244 (1999).

The full implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), which established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is of paramount importance for the peace, security and development of the Balkans, South-East Europe and Europe as a whole, and, I would add, globally. The involvement, non-involvement or partial involvement of the Security Council in the Kosovo conflict initiated a broad discussion of the relevance of the principles and purposes of the Charter, particularly the principles of the sovereign equality of States and of non-interference in internal affairs, the issue of humanitarian intervention and the role of the General Assembly in matters of peace and security. This discussion is continuing.

My delegation is of the view that human rights must be observed and protected and that the international community cannot remain indifferent to massive violation of human rights. Anybody's help to prevent the violation of human rights or armed conflict should be welcomed. The legal ground for action is the United Nations Charter and international law, particularly international humanitarian law, the law of refugees and political, civil, economic, social and cultural human rights law.

The organs of our Organization mandated to deliberate and act on such issues are the General

Assembly, the Security Council and, of course, the Economic and Social Council. In our view, it is not wise to concentrate everything in the Security Council and to allow the General Assembly to be ignored or marginalized. Both, along with the Economic and Social Council, should be involved and all Member States should be given the chance to advance their views and help. In this regard, I consider pertinent the questions raised in the statement made by the representative of Colombia, who spoke earlier today.

It is important to start this process. Instead of once a year, the Security Council could report to the General Assembly on its work every quarter. We do not need to wait one year to hear about the Security Council's work. The Secretary-General could advance this process by reporting to the General Assembly every quarter on the work of the Organization and by using those occasions to make suggestions for action by our Organization. If these or similar proposals to the Security Council and to the Secretary-General were taken up, the work of the General Assembly would be energized. That would be to the benefit of the purposes of our Organization and its Member States.

As members know, the Security Council, its present work and future role have been the subjects of many discussions, formal and informal, for some years now. And they will continue. The crucial thing is adherence to the provisions of the Charter, in particular to Articles 24 and 27. If the Council members were to adhere to these Articles, then all other issues — such as the enlargement of its membership and the democratization and transparency of its work — would acquire different dimensions. Parallel to this, it is essential that the General Assembly start to work in accordance with Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter, by which the General Assembly is entrusted to consider any questions or any matters, including the maintenance of international peace and security, and to make recommendations to the Member States and to the Security Council. To start to perform its tasks under the Charter, the General Assembly should start to work all year round, not only one or two months.

Next year, the Millennium Summit and the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations will be the right occasions for our Organization to finally abandon the period of confrontation and to enter a period of cooperation, integration and equality, and to stop retrogressive forces and enhance the forces of cooperation based on mutual respect. Only then will our Organization be an Organization of equal rights of nations, large and small, and truly a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations towards the attainment of common ends, as required by the Charter.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to convey our thanks to the permanent representative of the Russian Federation, President of the Security Council for the current month, for his concise presentation of the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. I wish also to commend him for the efficient manner in which he is steering the work of the Council and which demonstrates his deep perception and sense of responsibility vis-à-vis the functions entrusted to the Council.

My delegation has carefully examined the contents of the fifty-fourth annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, submitted under Article 15 of the Charter. The report underlines the close relationship between the Council and the Assembly and the importance of that relationship, especially in ensuring peace and security for the human race. My delegation views the report in question as yet another link in the chain that binds the two organs. This report provides an opportunity to all States Members of the United Nations to express their views and aspirations regarding the work of the Security Council, one of the main organs that constitute the backbone of the United Nations system.

Having said that, my delegation wishes to stress Kuwait's firm belief in the absolute importance of the Security Council as a mechanism that embodies the collective position of the international community on critical issues that can affect the fate of nations. The most prominent example to us in Kuwait was the action taken by the Security Council, with international support, to stop Iraqi aggression against the State of Kuwait in 1990. The Council continues to fulfil its role of maintaining security and stability in Kuwait in particular, and in the Arab Gulf region in general.

Having reviewed the report of the Security Council, Kuwait is drawn in particular to two subjects that are of special interest to us, on the basis of our continuing interest in the work of the Council.

First, over the past several years, my delegation has carefully followed the statements on previous reports made by Member States that focused on the Council's performance and the need to reform its structure. There have also been calls demanding improvement of the report's format, with a view to enhancing its analysis of the Council's achievements and its deliberations on

important international issues. However, my delegation will have an opportunity to express its views in detail on the reform and expansion of the Council when we speak under agenda item 38, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters".

Speaking substantively on the content of the report before us today, we note with satisfaction the efforts made to introduce improvements and to expand the analytical dimension of the report. This includes personal assessments of the work of the Council by the representatives who had just completed their mandate as President of the Council during the period covered by the report, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/193. Kuwait feels that we should encourage Council members to maintain this approach. We also associate ourselves with other States that have insisted it is important and advisable to enhance the analytical aspect of the report.

Secondly, regarding the deliberations and efforts of the Security Council in its follow-up of the Iraq-Kuwait situation, my delegation wishes to express Kuwait's appreciation to the Security Council for its adoption early this month of the Secretary-General's recommendation to renew the mandate of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), which operates along the border between Kuwait and Iraq, pursuant to Security Council resolution 689 (1991).

In addition, my delegation wishes to refer to a point made in the note by the President of the Security Council (S/1999/100), under the item entitled "The situation between Iraq and Kuwait", concerning the decision by the Council to establish three separate panels to evaluate Iraq's compliance in three major areas: the elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the questions of Kuwaiti prisoners and the return of Kuwaiti property. The Council reviewed the report and recommendations of the Chairman of the three panels, which are also cited in the Council's report. Since last March, the Council has been engaged in detailed and intensive consultations with a view to adopting a resolution on the recommendations of the panels. Kuwait attaches great importance to all three matters.

In this regard, Kuwait supports the efforts of all members of the Council, especially the five permanent members, who have been working strenuously to reach consensus on these recommendations. Kuwait wishes to stress the importance of maintaining the unity of the Security Council in dealing with this issue, which we hope will adopt a resolution reflecting such unity. Not only would this ensure full compliance by Iraq, but would also lend greater effectiveness and legitimacy to previous Council resolutions in this regard.

Given the sensitive nature of issues examined by the Security Council, in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security, my delegation fully understands the reasons that prompt the frequent holding of closed, informal meetings by the Security Council to discuss these issues. In such settings, Council members have greater latitude to express their views freely, without neglecting the need to consult closely with the parties directly concerned. My delegation also fully appreciates the reasons for this methodology. At the same time, we encourage the Security Council to increase the number of open meetings, as has been the case recently, in order to discuss extremely important international questions. Good examples are the open debates on the causes of conflict in Africa, on the protection of civilians in time of war and, most recently, on responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. In our view, this is a positive trend that we hope will continue. I wish to commend all the members of the Security Council for their cooperation and their efforts to practise transparency and to provide useful information to non-member States. We urge them to continue on this positive track.

Finally, my delegation hopes that members of the Security Council will react to the views and criticism of non-member States with patience and sympathetic understanding, especially since these views, in the final analysis, contribute to the common interest and reflect the desire of Member States to improve the working methods of the Council, which we believe is the safety valve for world peace and stability. Furthermore, Kuwait, a non-member of the Security Council, calls for the provision of adequate support to Council members, with a view to helping them seek solutions and measures that meet the fundamental goal of our Organization: the maintenance of international peace and security. We must always bear in mind the difference in perception between the observer and the active player. The latter bears a more difficult and heavier responsibility.

Mr. Sadauskas (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Mr. Oskaras Jusys, Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations.

As we bid farewell to the most tumultuous century in human history, the recollection of actions taken or

evaded by the Security Council reflects modern history. The report of the Security Council (A/54/2) demonstrates that the cold war did not wither away but rather burst into smaller conflicts all over the globe. The number of lives lost and shattered by local conflicts is not diminishing. Conflicts are even less manageable than the danger of a global war. The reason for such a situation is widely acknowledged: the nature of crises has changed; most of today's conflicts take place within States and not between them.

The principles of State sovereignty and non-interference, as well as the uneven fragmentation of the interests of States with the capacity to stop such conflicts, have begun to play into the hands of war and against peace. A glimpse of a world map displaying conflicts presents a grim picture and guarantees that the Security Council will remain as busy as ever.

For instance, the situation in Angola is appalling. A large part of the country has been made uninhabitable. It did not take weapons of mass destruction to do this. Mere ignorance of the obvious fact that there would be no winners, coupled with an uncontrolled arms flow and an ineffective international sanctions regime, were sufficient. As a result, massive famine and disease kill thousands and threaten millions.

The shadow cast by conflict in the Great Lakes region of Africa was lightened by a glimmer of hope after the Lusaka Accords were reached. Yet awareness of the causes of the enormous chaos in the heart of Africa, and the necessity to bring peace to the region, reveal the extraordinary efforts needed there. It will be the most serious challenge for the Security Council in the years to come.

No brighter day is dawning in Afghanistan. There is no agreement between major international players on how to end the destruction of what remains of that country, let alone achieve peace between the warring sides themselves.

Kashmir has earned the reputation that it will be the last burning place on earth. The possession of nuclear capabilities by both India and Pakistan threatens more than just mutual destruction. What was to be the subject of civilized negotiations turned out instead to be a fresh round of nuclear proliferation — the scourge we had recently thought to be on the brink of elimination.

Chaos in Somalia has led to a situation in which virtually no State exists any more. After the failed peace enforcement attempt, neither the Security Council nor anybody else has offered a solution for the Horn of Africa.

The latest blow was Timor. It is clear now that the belatedness of international intervention was, in part, to blame for the heavy loss of life.

One could go on and on with such examples. In spite of this pessimistic depiction, however, there have been some positive signs in international peace-making. Eritrea and Ethiopia seem to have realized the pointlessness of their war, which cost so much and solved nothing; they are embarking on acceptable methods of resolving differences. The Central African Republic and the Western Sahara are also on a winding, but firm, path to peace. Be it painstaking and slow, the Middle East peace process is still making headway.

The most outstanding example of conflict resolution for us is Kosovo. Genocide in the old continent, after sufficient disgrace in Srebenica, was incomprehensible. Five years down the road it struck again, despite the euphoria of slogans about a united and peaceful Europe. The five-digit number of people slaughtered in two months was symptomatic of flaws in the current international security system. The Kosovo crisis and its resolution, or, rather, attempted resolution, have given rise to fundamental discussions about the role and capability of the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council.

Claims about the lack of an explicit mandate from the Security Council for military action in Kosovo, which is part of the sovereign Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, hold water. It may be just a fact of life. When evidence of the brutal murder of helpless people seeped through international borders, the emerging dilemma for the international community became a moral one: a choice between the sanctity of human lives and strict international standards. Nobody should have been confronted with this dilemma in the first place. But once it happened the reasoning behind the subsequent proactive choice went like this: improvement of the international system, however urgent, could wait, while threatened lives could not. The Kosovo lesson should not have cost so many innocent lives.

A similar lesson was simultaneously taught to us in Sierra Leone. Devastated by a most brutal civil war, its people decided that saving precious human lives should prevail, even at the cost of potential impunity for those

guilty of the most horrific atrocities. But for the virtual absence of efficient international support, we might not be reading today in the press about an unforgettable, sad admission by many Sierra Leoneans that, for the sake of saving lives, they were prepared to forget, but not to forgive, the nightmares they were put through.

Conflicts that start inside a country threaten neighbours and regions. Attention to conflicts, whether internal or external, is thus all but legitimate. There is a universal principle of non-interference and State sovereignty. But there are other universal principles underlying international relations, including respect for human rights. The principle of non-interference is universal, but not absolute. Abuse of this principle in countries with internal tensions is like an illness which, if untreated, may develop into a contagion-carrying threat to others.

The principle of non-interference in a State's affairs is losing its protective role for other reasons as well. International relations are increasingly based on something else, more human, more reasonable and more progressive than the divinity of the principle of State sovereignty. Equally important is the supremacy of a human being over the State. The cases of Kosovo, East Timor and Sierra Leone are the best testimony to this reality. States do not own individuals, whether their own citizens or not. States cannot do whatever they please with individuals within their jurisdiction. New tones in international relations tend to justify involvement from the outside to stop flagrant violations of human rights. Acknowledging that violations of human rights are often the main cause of conflict, with knock-on effects, strengthens this principle.

The newly evolving concept of humanitarian intervention is a real fact now. It has already taken place in practice, and is likely to be repeated. The concept lags behind reality, and has aroused controversy, which could have been avoided had a consensus been worked out by United Nations Member States beforehand. Since humanitarian intervention — and who knows what other kinds of intervention are yet to catch us off guard? — sets in motion profound thinking on the principles of non-interference and sovereignty, there is an obvious need to establish rules legitimizing such interventions, as well as mechanisms to uphold such rules.

It is probable that State borders and sovereignty will gradually lose their significance in the next century. It has already happened in economics, with the rise of multinational corporations. It is also bound to happen in international politics, thus opening life within States to scrutiny from the outside. This means a growing role for regional and global intergovernmental institutions, including the United Nations.

The Security Council, which is already equipped with strong legal powers, is likely to be at the centre of the most important decisions. It is essential for the Council to understand, embrace and exploit this trend. In order to be able to adapt to a new philosophy of international relations, the Security Council itself has to be transformed. The discussions on reform of the Council have even pre-empted the escalated debate on State sovereignty vis-à-vis other founding principles of inter-State relations. Now that we have a newly evolving foundation of international politics, reform of the Security Council is all the more urgent.

The Council is too small to reflect the diversity of nations. It is a paradox that, for instance, two thirds of the Council's agenda is about Africa, which is so grossly under-represented in the body which decides the continent's fate. It is, however, less of a paradox when the under-representation of Africa allows the Council to shun its responsibilities to that continent. Rwanda was the most horrible example. We therefore fully concur with the calls voiced in the General Assembly general debate, in particular by the Presidents of Namibia and Nigeria, to give Africa sufficient and legitimate representation on the Council.

Having a greater number of members on the Security Council would enrich it intellectually and in terms of those members' knowledge of their own regions, and thus offer better means to confront challenges. A bigger Council would also mean greater openness of its work. The secrecy surrounding informal consultations is less and less convincing in terms of confidentiality needed for decision-making and there is increasingly more reason for suspicion that some Council members are either reluctant to disclose their methods of solving conflicts or — just as bad — conceal the absence of solutions.

We therefore commend a number of open meetings that were held in the last 12 months. Such meetings should be held even more often, and should concentrate on specific conflicts rather than theoretical subjects, be more action-oriented, less sterile and bear less resemblance to General Assembly debates. Open meetings do not, however, exempt the Council from its

duty to institutionalize greater transparency of its proceedings.

As in previous years, we have not been convinced that the veto power has helped the Council to discharge its duties under the Charter, let alone achieve the goals of conflict prevention and management. The veto is as undemocratic and controversial as ever, and its use needs to be limited. It would be best to achieve such a curtailment through comprehensive decisions on Security Council reform.

We thank the five outgoing members for their diligent work during their term, and extend best wishes to the incoming members in carrying out their difficult tasks. We also ask all members of the Council to remain mindful of the fact that the Council's moral authority depends on its overall performance. We have great confidence that that authority will grow.

Ms. Wensley (Australia): As all members know, Australia has a long-standing interest in this important agenda item. We believe that the Security Council, as the organ of the United Nations which has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, is in many ways the key to ensuring that the United Nations remains relevant to the international community.

Discussion on the report of the Security Council provides an opportunity — another opportunity — for Member States to reflect upon the importance of the Council, its role and how its efficiency and effectiveness may be further enhanced.

As is very evident from the report, the past year has been a challenging one for the Security Council, due to the significant increase in the number and the scale of peacekeeping operations and the crises in Kosovo and East Timor. It has thus become even more critical for the Security Council to reform and to revitalize itself in order to be able to respond swiftly and adequately to the renewed pressures upon it.

Working methods are one area in which Australia feels that the Council is in particular need of reform.

The Council's working methods continue, in our view, to be too rigid and exclusionary. A number of Member States have drawn attention to circumstances where their own interests are directly affected by an issue under discussion and yet they are excluded from informal consultations of the Council. Their only opportunities for full participation are in the highly formalized environment of formal meetings.

Australia is, as always, very practical. We do not advocate an end to the use of informal consultations by the Council, or that all Council meetings should take place in public. We recognize that informal consultations are an indispensable tool for consensus-building and for effective decision-making in the Council, as they are in any multilateral process. But we believe that the Council has developed an unhealthy reliance on them, to the detriment of transparency and, in many cases, effectiveness.

Many routine briefings and reports by the Secretary-General could and should take place in sessions open to Member States. Where particularly sensitive issues are involved, these could be dealt with in camera; but the majority of reports would not fall into this category.

Australia also believes that there are circumstances where the Council can contribute to the resolution of disputes or to the easing of tensions between Member States by giving itself the option of direct access to the disputing parties. We see no arguments for not allowing a disputing party to appear before the Council to present its case, to respond to questions, or to be presented with the Council's views, away from the public and the media spotlight. It is a mechanism that could help inform Council decisions, and it could also be a useful form of early warning to disputing parties.

Australia's recent experience as leader of the multinational force in East Timor has reinforced our concerns about rigidities in Council procedures. Under Security Council resolution 1264 (1999), the leadership of the multinational force is required to provide periodic reports to the Council. This we are doing, with two fortnightly reports submitted so far covering the first month of the operations of the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET). But, whereas in the case of a full United Nations peacekeeping operation the Council can ask questions and can engage in discussion with a senior representative of that operation, there is no provision for the multinational force leadership to brief the Council directly. Despite our responsibility for leadership of a multinational force authorized by the Security Council, Australia's status as a non-member of the Council precludes such direct briefings, even on an occasional, as needed, basis.

The recent Security Council mission to East Timor is, by contrast, an example of where quick and creative action by the Council has had a positive effect on the resolution of a complex issue. That mission enabled members of the Council to see firsthand the nature and extent of the problem, talk directly to the main players, and come to a more informed view about what to do next. We again take the opportunity to commend the members of the mission — particularly the presidency of the Netherlands and the leader of the mission, Ambassador Andjaba of Namibia — for taking this important initiative. It is a good example of the authority of the Council's being used in a constructive, creative and timely way in support of the maintenance of international peace and security.

We are very aware that many of these ideas have been the subject of discussion not only in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, but also in the Council's own informal working group. We wish to applaud and convey our support to those delegations in that informal working group that have been working hard advocating greater transparency and flexibility in the Council's working methods.

There is no question but that the Security Council should remain mistress of its own procedures. But increasingly it is being hamstrung by the rigidities of those procedures. Meeting the need for greater flexibility and openness is overdue.

Australia welcomes the steps that have been taken so far towards greater openness, including — as a good number of my colleagues have mentioned in this discussion — the organization of open debates, but I stress that we welcome those when they genuinely contribute to Council deliberations. We also welcome the incorporation of transparency reforms that were introduced last year into the report of the Security Council. We would like to see, however, the report acquire more analytical depth. We think, like the representative of Ireland, that the monthly assessments by successive Presidents have taken us a step in that direction, but we consider that there is further to go. More could and should be done, and in that regard we would like the report in the future to include a forward-looking assessment of the emerging challenges facing the Council.

Finally, Australia would like to take this opportunity to place on record its appreciation to members of the Council for the individual contributions that they have made to the complex and difficult work of the Security Council over the last year. We would also like to congratulate very warmly the newly elected non-permanent members on their election and to pledge them our full support and cooperation as they face the challenging task ahead of them when they assume their seats next year.

Mr. Bouah-Kamon (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to take this opportunity, as we discuss the report of the Security Council, to make a few comments and suggestions concerning the matters examined by the Council as the body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as matters relating to methods of work and procedural aspects.

By Article 24 of the Charter the members of the Organization confer upon the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. As we understand this provision, the Security Council is the body that must intervene wherever international peace and security are threatened or disrupted. However, Chapter VIII provides that the Council may encourage regional organizations to instigate agreements for the peaceful settlement of disputes. We note that today regional organizations are increasingly involved in peace initiatives, in ceasefire negotiations and in deploying troops to ensure security prior to United Nations intervention.

The situation in Kosovo illustrated the paralysis of the Security Council, bringing to mind the sad period of the cold war. The secondary role played by the United Nations after the robust intervention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) leads us to question the role of the Security Council in the resolution of regional conflicts. Will it be limited to humanitarian assistance and post-conflict activities, leaving mediation and peace-building to regional organizations?

Should the success of regional organizations in Africa and elsewhere bring about the withdrawal of the Security Council from those regions? My delegation notes with regret that after the setback in Somalia the United Nations has stopped sending intervention troops to Africa and since then has involved itself cautiously and in a limited way in the serious crises on our continent.

Despite their economic and social difficulties, African countries find themselves obliged to create the necessary security conditions for the intervention of the international community when there is a breach of the peace. As peace is a prerequisite for social and economic

development, our regional organizations — such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) — have had to become mediators for peace, to the detriment of their primary purpose of regional economic integration. These regional and subregional bodies require financial and logistical support from the international community, for without it they will not be able to discharge their original mandates.

We now note with concern another aspect of the disengagement of the international community: the crisis in funding peacekeeping operations. In referring to the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) in his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General appropriately pointed out:

> "Unfortunately, funding for MINURCA is suffering from a worrying lack of enthusiasm among donors, and lack of funding will undoubtedly hamper the efforts of MINURCA to support and observe the elections." *(A/54/1, para. 97)*

In the same context, recalling that initially there was a very low donor response with regard to Tajikistan, he noted:

> "The resulting delays again point to the drawbacks of funding essential elements of a mandate through voluntary contributions, rather than through assessed contributions as is normally the case in peacekeeping operations." *(ibid, para. 98)*

My delegation is concerned that some delegations cherish the hope that in each region of the world "policemen" charged with keeping the peace will materialize to lead peacekeeping operations and bear the burden. In Africa, where there are only developing countries with limited resources faced with many conflicts, it would be difficult to find a substitute for the contributions of the international community to peacekeeping. If this idea took root, it would acknowledge the Security Council's abdication of its responsibility and call into question its very existence.

The situation in Kosovo leads us to reflect on the growing danger of seeing regional organizations go beyond the limits of regional action imposed by Article 53 of the Charter. The use of force without Security Council authorization is a serious threat to international peace and security.

Likewise, the right to interfere without the Charter safeguards is a real threat to respect for the sovereignty of Member States. While it is possible to some extent to tolerate humanitarian intervention, it must be decided by the Security Council in the name of the principle of universal human rights and to counter the threat of genocide.

My delegation would once again like to reiterate the concern expressed by African States at the meeting of the Security Council held on 29 and 30 September to discuss the situation in Africa. The Security Council should make an effort to restore its credibility by ending to its attitude of double standards with regard to Africa. Its mandate is to preserve peace throughout the world, and not only in certain regions.

Efforts are being made by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and some subregional groups to strengthen Africa's peacekeeping capability. Those efforts are praiseworthy, but they do not release the international community and the Security Council from their paramount obligations with regard to peace and security in Africa. African Governments are shouldering their share of the responsibility for finding solutions to the problems that affect the continent. It is up to the Security Council to shoulder its share.

We are entitled to wonder whether a renewed and enlarged Council, with equitable geographical distribution and permanent members representing every region of the world, including Africa, might not be better able to shoulder its responsibilities. Everyone agrees that the Council's composition, structure and working methods have become obsolete and do not reflect the political and economic realities of today's world. Security Council reform must necessarily take into consideration the new international realities. We believe that the right of veto must be limited to measures under Chapter VII of the Charter and that transparency in the functioning of the Council must be ensured. The Working Group should seek a consensus that reflects the interests of the majority of Member States. An enlarged, transparent and democratic Security Council will be in a good position to face the challenges of the coming millennium in the area of international peace and security.

My delegation considers that our Organization should make greater efforts to prevent conflicts and also

to strengthen regional and subregional machinery in order to minimize the causes of conflict. Early warning, preventive deployment, disarmament — particularly as regards small arms and light weapons — respect for human rights, and the struggle against poverty and marginalization are some aspects of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations aimed at promoting a culture of peace.

On the threshold of the new millennium, we must reflect on ways and means of creating a world of peace by eliminating the causes of social and political instability and by creating a partnership among all forces of goodwill. This would enable us to eradicate the causes of conflict and help us to give all the world's peoples the opportunity to live at peace with each other.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The submission by the Security Council of its annual report to the General Assembly is a constitutional requirement under the provisions of Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter of the United Nations. It is an affirmation of the concept of the Council's accountability to the General Assembly in its capacity as the organ representing the membership of the Organization, on whose behalf the Council acts.

The report represents a key aspect of this close relationship between the two organs, as defined by the Charter, especially as regards the maintenance of international peace and security. The debate on the report of the Council is considered one of the General Assembly's most important tools in exercising its mandate of following the work of the Council, discussing the measures that the Council takes and issuing recommendations thereon. It is worth noting here that in addition to the provisions of the Charter governing the relationship between the Assembly and the Council, the 1962 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on certain expenses of the United Nations made a significant contribution to clarifying this relationship in an official and legal manner.

Moreover, the primary objective of General Assembly resolution 51/193 of 1996 emphasized the need to regulate the relationship between the Assembly and the Council and to provide a greater measure of democracy and transparency in international relations. Hence, we call on the Council to submit, in addition to its annual reports to the General Assembly, special reports on specific issues of interest to it under Article 24 of the Charter.

I would like to recall here the common paper submitted to the Council by Egypt and Indonesia in 1996, which included examples of cases where the Council should have submitted special reports to the Assembly. The relationship between the General Assembly and the Council should not be confined solely to a debate in the Assembly on its report but should include enhanced interaction between the two organs, as provided for in Articles 11 and 12 of the Charter, so that the Security Council can exercise its right to call on the General Assembly to submit recommendations regarding situations threatening international peace and security.

The Charter of the United Nations never intended to confine this domain to the Council. The Security Council works in the interests of Member States and on behalf of the entire membership, hence it must act in accordance with the provisions of the Charter and yield to the will of the majority of the membership of this international Organization. Thus the legitimate framework within which the Council must meet its responsibilities is one of commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter, especially non-resort to the use of force except in the implementation of its resolutions adopted under Chapter VII. This necessarily requires the existence of a conflict or situations leading to a conflict, and that the dispute or situation is tantamount to a threat to international peace and security or a breach thereof, or that an act of aggression has actually been committed. It should not intervene in matters that are within the domestic jurisdiction of States, as set out in Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter, which clarifies the relationship between the internal jurisdiction of States and the measures that can be taken by the Council when international peace and security are in jeopardy.

The importance of the Council's responsibility is evident in the light of the changes that have occurred in the international arena in the wake of the cold war. Numerous current armed conflicts are intra-State rather than inter-State ones. This in turn raises the question of the ability of the United Nations to intervene to settle those conflicts. The international community must therefore safeguard the sovereignty of States, since it is an essential characteristic of the contemporary international order and the linchpin of the Charter.

The international community must also see to it that the Council abides by the main criterion defined by the Charter for its intervention by force under Chapter VII. Article 39 gives the Council the power to determine the existence of any threat to the peace or breach thereof, so a given conflict, especially if it is internal, must be

tantamount to a threat to international peace or a breach thereof.

In this regard, we would like to affirm the importance of the Council's consideration of humanitarian crises or human rights violations despite the fact that they may not be tantamount to a threat to international peace and security. We should agree on an updated definition. Here I reiterate the need to discuss this objectively and democratically through an open and democratic international dialogue characterized by the greatest measure of candour and transparency and in a sound constitutional framework. I would like to recall Egypt's proposal that this question be discussed in the context of the Working Group on the Agenda for Peace, which, in our view, is an appropriate forum for this purpose. Hence we emphasize the need for the Council to consider those questions that fall within its purview while refraining from encroaching on the competence of the Assembly.

The Council's discussion of the question of terrorism in a theoretical and abstract context and its adoption of a normative resolution give rise to a number of misgivings on our part — not as far as the importance of resisting terrorism is concerned, which my country strongly condemns in all its forms, but because of our conviction that this issue falls within the purview of the General Assembly.

It is possible to say that the report still seems to a large extent to be a mere compilation of documents that delegations have already seen, which suggests that it has no real function, is a waste of effort and resources and does not therefore conform with the austerity measures taken by the Organization.

It is not enough for anyone interested in the questions discussed by the Council simply to review an endless list of communications received by the Council or a list of its resolutions. The documents listed should be limited to those that are not included in the published compilation of Council resolutions and decisions. On the other hand, we note gratefully that this year the report includes a new section providing information about the annual reports of the sanctions committees, which we have often called for in the past.

I should like to make several comments on that new section. The report does not analyse the situations that have led to the imposition of sanctions, explain the purpose of imposing sanctions in each case or provide information about the results of their imposition. In our view, the report should include an evaluation of the results of the imposition of sanctions with a view to measuring their efficiency and the extent to which they enhance the purposes and principles of the United Nations and the extent of their impact on the targeted States and on the region. For that reason, we call for the sanctions committees to hold open, formal meetings and to provide a record of the proceedings of their closed meetings, and for information about both to be included in the report.

That brings me to my next comment, which relates to the nature of sanctions imposed by the Council. We have often emphasized our belief that sanctions are an exceptional measure that should not be resorted to except in extreme situations, as provided for under Chapter VII of the Charter, and after peaceful means for settling disputes, provided for under Chapter VI, have been exhausted. Furthermore, individual political considerations of members should not take precedence over the collective considerations of the members of the Council or the Member States. We have also emphasized our belief that such sanctions should be imposed in accordance with declared objectives and established criteria, and within a limited time-frame, so that they do not become a political tool for the Council.

It has become easy to impose sanctions, but difficult to lift them. We have drawn attention to the collateral damage caused by the sanctions imposed under Chapter VII of the Charter, whether with regard to the populations of targeted States, as can be seen in the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Iraq and the hardships that the Libyan people have suffered and are still suffering, or with regard to third States whose interests are linked to the States on which sanctions are imposed.

Regrettably, sanctions imposed against certain States under Chapter VII have caused serious damage to third States and their peoples. Egypt is one of the States most affected, for reasons that are outside the purview of our current debate. If the Council is considering imposing or renewing sanctions on a particular State, it must give that State an opportunity to make its views known to the Council before those sanctions are imposed or renewed. We also call upon the Council to allow States that are not members of the Council, but that believe that the imposition of such sanctions may prejudice their interests, to participate in the debate if the Council feels that their interests will be particularly affected by the imposition of such sanctions.

As regards the stage following the imposition of sanctions, I need not remind the Assembly that the Charter has never sought to inflict damage on the interests of third States. Rather, it has established a mechanism to which the Council has not resorted so far, whereby the Council can consult with the State concerned and acquaint itself with its point of view before imposing sanctions, thereby enabling the Council to form a complete picture encompassing humanitarian, economic and political aspects.

In this regard, we call upon the Security Council once again to consider establishing further permanent measures and mechanisms to hold consultations, as provided in the Charter, with third States that face, or may face, particular economic problems resulting from the implementation of preventive or coercive measures taken by the Council. The aim of this would be to find solutions to such problems, including ways and means to increase the effectiveness of its working methods and practices when reviewing requests for assistance submitted by affected States.

In this regard, we note with interest the comments in this year's report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization with regard to the importance of considering the concept of targeted sanctions. Egypt has always stressed the need for a clear legal framework and established rules to govern the work of the Council. Without such a framework, the door will be open to double standards, which will undermine the credibility of the Council and the legitimacy of its resolutions. That is why Egypt and the other non-aligned countries called for all of the reform measures agreed upon in the Working Group on Council reform to be institutionalized. In December 1997, towards the end of its term as a non-permanent member of the Council, Egypt, together with the other non-permanent members at the time, submitted a paper calling for recording the proceedings of the informal consultations of the Council so as to make it easier for the new members of the Council to undertake the mandate for which they were elected. We hope that the next report of the Security Council to the General Assembly will include a record of such practices.

Finally, it is clear that discussing improvements in the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly is just one component of the comprehensive endeavour to reform the work of the Council and to enhance the transparency of its work. This will necessitate a comprehensive approach to the issues, foremost among which must be consideration of the veto, which calls at this stage for serious consideration by all Member States.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): The authors of the Charter of the United Nations envisaged the annual reports of the Security Council, the organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security, as a centrepiece of the Council's communication with the General Assembly, the United Nations organ with the general responsibility for the realization of Charter principles. The General Assembly is entitled to analyze the work of the Security Council, to encourage improvements in its work and, naturally, to criticize its shortcomings. The current report of the Security Council reveals both improvements and shortcomings. As an elected member of the Security Council, Slovenia feels responsible to share its experience with other States Members of the United Nations.

The period covered in the report has been a dynamic one, and important new experience was gained during this time. The work of the Security Council was characterized by both activism and hesitation, by the will to act as well as an awareness of shortages with respect to the resources that are vital for action. Those shortages of available resources have time and again cast doubt on the political will of Member States to make the Council an effective organ truly capable of carrying out its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In the area of the Security Council's methods of work, there were some important improvements. The Council has expanded the amount of its public work, including public meetings and public briefings. The assessments of the Presidents of the Security Council are becoming more substantive, and statements to the press are available in written form. Some of the elected members, including ourselves, have also started using the new opportunities provided by the information superhighway to make assessments and statements to the press available to the wider public.

The sanctions committees are making their work more accessible. The Chairpersons of the sanctions committees launched an initiative in September last year which produced a coherent set of guidelines and proposals for future policy-making and practical methods of work relating to sanctions. Specific proposals for improved working methods in this area, as advanced by the Chairpersons of the sanctions committees, were adopted on 29 January this year in the form of a note by the President of the Security Council (S/1999/92).

Moreover, in the case of the sanctions against Libya, the Security Council has demonstrated its ability to suspend sanctions and, before that, to help in the process of creating conditions for suspension. At present, consultations are under way to develop a new system for Iraq which should include a realistic possibility of suspension of sanctions, in parallel with substantive progress in the implementation of Iraqi obligations relating to weapons of mass destruction. I am pleased to note that the idea of suspension, first suggested by Slovenia on 25 January this year, has gained very wide acceptance. Now, new dynamism is necessary to overcome the stalemate which has characterized relations with Iraq for too long.

One among the recent developments deserves special attention: the successful mission of the Security Council to Jakarta and Dili in September this year. Although technically outside the scope of the present report, it must be mentioned for two reasons. First, the mission is an important part of the Council's responsibility initiated by the tripartite Agreement on East Timor concluded on 5 May this year; and secondly, it provides an example of the need for quick Council action when circumstances so require. Success of the mission suggests that the Council should use this method in the future, and that it should ensure that the authoritative character of missions dispatched by the Council is preserved. In other words, such missions should be sent to provide practical assistance or to enable solutions, not only to study situations.

Finally, and perhaps most important, on the positive side, the period covered in the present report encompasses developments which have started to give renewed importance to peacekeeping and other military operations launched or authorized by the Security Council. The report also relates to developments that have started to give a new role to the United Nations in post-conflict peace-building by establishing civilian administrations in crisis regions. That evolution, which started in 1998 with the peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic, has brought the Security Council to the threshold of a new era characterized by new operations in Kosovo and East Timor, as well as in Sierra Leone and elsewhere in Africa. Today, at the beginning of this new phase, the international community must mobilize all its will and all the necessary resources to succeed in this new and difficult set of missions.

The success of the new peacekeeping missions, and indeed of the entire work of the Security Council, is by no means assured. In all the areas where progress can be noted, one must also recognize great difficulties, some of which vastly overshadow the degree of success achieved so far. In the domain of the Council's methods of work, we must ask ourselves whether the practice of holding frequent thematic debates serves the effectiveness of the Security Council. It is probably too early for an assessment of the effect of thematic debates undertaken in the period covered by the present report. However, it is not premature to caution against repetition and against the possibility of choosing subjects which properly belong to the General Assembly.

Efforts to improve the Security Council's policies relating to sanctions leave much to be desired. While the Council has been able to suspend sanctions when conditions were met, it has been less capable of modifying the operation of sanctions regimes so as to improve their targeting, enhance the efficiency of their implementation and ensure that adverse humanitarian effects are minimized. In addition to improved decisions on specific sanctions regimes, the Council needs an improved overall policy framework that would provide more sophisticated criteria for the introduction and targeting of sanctions as well as for humanitarian exemptions, for modification and for the termination of sanctions. The note by the President of the Security Council of 29 January this year is a modest beginning which should lead to the elaboration of a more complete policy framework.

The present report refers to a wide variety of situations, some of which reveal fundamental questions about the functioning of the Security Council. In our opinion, three among them call for special attention.

First, while we welcome contributions by members of groups of States which have a special interest and seek a special role in dealing with particular crisis situations, some of the practices of such groups deserve critical consideration. Thus, for example, the group of six plus two States on Afghanistan continues to plead against military assistance to parties in Afghanistan, while at the same time little is being done to give practical effect to those pleas. In the period covered by the report, the Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia was unable to provide a meaningful contribution to addressing the issues of Kosovo and of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such examples clearly give rise to concern. Groups which were established as diplomatic instruments to assist the Security Council could turn into unhelpful devices only creating the illusion of assistance to the Council's efforts.

Secondly, further thought needs to be given to the evolution of a variety of relationships between the United Nations and various regional organizations. It is accurate to say that regional organizations generally provide valuable assistance to the United Nations in addressing many crisis situations. Sometimes United Nations action without assistance of a regional organization becomes inconceivable, as shown in the cases of Sierra Leone and Kosovo. However, the political management of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations needs to be improved further. Additional efforts need to be made to ensure that cooperation by regional organizations is in strict accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and that the primacy of the responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security is not impaired.

Thirdly, the veto continues to give rise to serious questions. In the period covered by the present report, Security Council action has been impaired by the veto of a permanent member, which prevented extension of a peacekeeping operation in a particularly volatile region. A few months earlier, Council action had been impaired by a threat to use the veto by another permanent member. That threat resulted in the adoption of an incomplete resolution which did not properly address all aspects of a threat to the peace. Subsequent experience showed once again that an incomplete response by the Security Council, sometimes resulting from a threat to use the veto, can lead to wrong decisions by the parties on the ground and to further aggravation of the threat to the peace.

There is nothing new in the thought that the veto should be used in the interest of international peace and security and that the element of national interest should be measured very carefully. Therefore, proposals to curtail the veto deserve careful consideration.

This brings me to my final point. The experience of the past year has once again proved the need for Security Council reform. That reform will be complete only if the issue of the veto is addressed adequately. We believe that the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on Security Council reform should be strengthened and that all United Nations Members should think hard and define the immediate objectives of that reform. It seems that without an agreement on the curtailment of the veto, it is not realistic to expect any agreement on new permanent members of the Security Council.

The realities of life do not allow the Security Council to stand still. Action is needed almost daily. The General Assembly can help in a variety of ways — by giving general guidance, by performing its own tasks in the field of maintenance of peace and security and, above all, by pursuing adequate reforms — at times when reforms are due. This is such a time.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Although for many of our delegations it is absolutely insufficient, at least this Assembly has a chance once a year to discuss extensively the work of the Security Council on the basis of its yearly report. We are grateful to the members of the Council and to the Secretariat for the effort that was surely involved in the preparation of such a large amount of material, which this year runs to almost 500 pages.

Despite the many criticisms that it draws year after year, the report that we see before us today is basically like the ones we have seen in years past. We have pages and pages of resolutions, presidential statements, documents sent and received, all previously known to the delegations or easy to locate. Without disregarding its value as part of the institutional memory of the Council, we reiterate that this type of report is far from what we hope for or need. Rather than a compilation of documents and an insubstantial narrative of the evolution of issues on the agenda, we would like to have an analytical report that sets out the political and legal basis for at least the most important decisions adopted by the Council.

The presentation of the yearly report of the Security Council is not a privilege granted to the Members of the Assembly; quite the contrary, it is an obligation clearly established in Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter. The Member States represented in the Assembly have a legitimate right to expect a proper account from the organ to which we have entrusted the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and which, in accordance with the Charter, acts on behalf of all Member States.

It was precisely in order to guarantee a proper account that, on the initiative of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, in 1996 the General Assembly adopted resolution 51/193, which encouraged the Council, in the submission of its reports to the Assembly, to provide a timely, substantive and analytical account of its work. Sadly, three years after the adoption of that resolution, the report of the Council still fails to take it

duly into consideration, and the Assembly has not even been told why.

The General Assembly has still not received the special reports that, in accordance with article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter, the Council must provide when necessary. Presenting such reports on specific questions would contribute to promoting the active relationship between the two organs, which we all desire, and the Assembly could then prepare useful recommendations for the Council's work on this basis. We would like to know the opinion of the Council on what kind of situations warrant the presentation of special reports, because at present there seem not to be any. Does the crisis in Kosovo not deserve a special report, that being a case in which the Security Council was entirely ignored as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) decided to carry out military action in flagrant violation of the most elementary principles of the Charter and international law?

During the year under consideration, the credibility of the Council, already impaired, suffered grave harm, and not a word about this appears in the yearly report or in any special report on this serious situation. This constitutes yet another clear proof that a profound reform of the Council is needed, undoubtedly the most sensitive task in the reform of the United Nations as a whole.

The Council should also prepare special reports on the reasons behind its increasingly clear incursion, without previous governmental agreement, into areas of the economic, social and humanitarian spheres, far beyond its responsibilities under the Charter.

With the excuse of seeking efficiency, the Security Council continues to do most of its work in closed meetings, even though this method has been emphatically and repeatedly called unacceptable by the immense majority of the Member States. The figures provided in the report itself illustrate clearly that the practice of former years remains unchanged. This year, while 121 formal meetings were held, 239 closed consultations of the whole were held, which amounts to two thirds of all the meetings of the Council. It would have been interesting if, along with noting that 511 hours were spent in private consultations, the report told us how many hours the Council spent in formal meetings. We are certain that this would further show the imbalance between private and formal meetings of the Council.

So entrenched is the secrecy syndrome in the Council's work that even most briefings on agenda items by the Secretary-General or his representatives are given in private meetings. In contrast, the open briefings held in the past year have been a very positive experience and show how effective transparency can be in the work of the Council. As a part of the reform of the Security Council, which we will discuss in more detail under agenda item 38, we feel that formal meetings must be the rule in the Council's work.

Until that goal is reached, the yearly report should also include records of the debates held in closed consultations, and dissenting opinions of Council members on certain agenda items should be reflected. In view of the limitations of the yearly report, the assessments by former Presidents and the daily informal briefing of the sitting President remain the only mechanisms that allow us a peek at what occurs in the private consultations.

In order to exercise our right to the information needed by our Governments to take timely political decisions, most of our delegations have to waste hours waiting in the South Lounge until some friendly representative of a Security Council member is ready to share information.

This year's incorporation of the annual reports of the sanctions Committees into the report is a step forward and should be maintained, but we underline the need for the meetings of these Committees to be open and for the records of their discussions to be included in the yearly report of the Council. This will provide the necessary transparency and will help discourage the manipulation of sanctions by some powerful members of the Council as a mechanism for punishing certain countries in order to serve their national interests.

Although we do not intend to discuss specific situations, we cannot fail to mention our concern about the fact that while most items on the agenda of the Council have to do with Africa, most of the attention and resources allocated to respond to crises are still not directed towards Africa. The Council cannot concentrate its attention on solving the problems of certain regions while remaining indifferent to others.

Transparency in the methods of work and the creation of authentic interaction with the General Assembly and the Member States will not weaken the Council; it will strengthen it. The first step would be for the Council to duly examine the observations and suggestions made during this debate on the annual report

and to take them into account in the process of changing its methods of work.

I would like to conclude by congratulating the newly elected members of the Security Council — Jamaica, Bangladesh, Mali, Tunisia and Ukraine — to which we wish the greatest success in their work. We are sure that they will spare no effort on the long road to be travelled before we have the Security Council we all hope for.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to draw the attention of the Assembly to document A/INF/54/3/Add.2, which has been distributed to delegations this morning. The document contains the tentative programme of work and schedule of plenary meetings of the General Assembly.

The lists of speakers for items mentioned in that document are now open.

The General Assembly, in due course, will be kept informed of the dates for the consideration of other agenda items, as well as of any additions or changes.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.